

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 FBO-02 /013 W
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R 101214Z MAY 76

FM AMEMBASSY MANAMA BAHRAIN
TO SECSTATE WASHINGTON DC 3009

S E C R E T MANAMA 545

FOR NEA/ARP, NEA/EX AND A/FBO

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS : ABLD, AFSP, BA

SUBJECT : EMBASSY HOUSING IN BAHRAIN

REF : MANAMA 544

1. MANAMA REQUESTS AUTHORITY TO NEGOTIATE A LONG-TERM
ARRANGEMENT FOR EMBASSY HOUSING IN BAHRAIN.

2. BY LOCAL STANDARDS THE BRITISH EMBASSY STAFF HERE IS WELL
AND INEXPENSIVELY HOUSED, ADJACENT TO THE U.S. NAVY'S SHORE
FACILITY, IN A PORTION OF THE LARGE JUFAIR PROPERTY WHICH THE
BRITISH POLITICAL RESIDENCY AND MILITARY FORCES OCCUPIED PRIOR
TO BAHRAIN'S INDEPENDENCE. THE JUFAIR PROPERTY IS NOW OWNED
BY THE GOVERNMENT OF BAHRAIN WHICH HAS PARCELED THE REMAINDER
OF IT OUT TO VARIOUS GOVERNMENT ENTITIES AND LOCAL CLUBS, UNDP
AND THE BAHRAIN INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL (RENT FREE). WHEN THE
BRITISH "WITHDREW" FROM BAHRAIN, THE BRITISH EMBASSY WISELY
ARRANGED TO RETAIN A SMALL PORTION OF JUFAIR TO HOUSE ITS STAFF
EXCEPT THE AMBASSADOR.

3. IT SEEMS AT PRESENT CERTAIN THAT THE U.S. NAVY MUST LEAVE
BAHRAIN BY JUNE 1977. A PORTION OF THE JUFAIR PROPERTY THE
NAVY LEASES (ABOUT THREE ACRES IMMEDIATELY ADJACENT TO THE
SUBSTANTIALLY MORE SPACIOUS BRITISH EMBASSY COMPOUND) HAS
STRIKING POTENTIAL AS AN AMERICAN EMBASSY COMPOUND. FOUR
BASICALLY SOUND BUILDINGS THERE COULD BE RENOVATED AND CONVERTED
TO PROVIDE TWO HOUSES (ONE PERHAPS SUITABLE AS AMBASSADOR'S

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RESIDENCE) AND PERHAPS FIVE STAFF APARTMENTS.

4. WE THINK THIS IS AN IDEA WELL WORTH EXPLORING. IN PRESENTING IT WE STRESS THE FOLLOWING CAVEATS:

(A) IT IS TOTALLY CONTINGENT ON GOB'S HOLDING TO ITS DECISION THAT MIDDLE EAST FORCE LEAVE BAHRAIN BY JUNE 1977. WHILE THIS SEEMS TO US INEVITABLE AND DECISION IS PUBLIC KNOWLEDGE LOCALLY, DESIRABILITY OF USG'S APPROACHING GOB ABOUT FUTURE EMBASSY USE OF PROPERTY MIDDLE EAST FORCE NOW LEASES IS A POLICY QUESTION WORTHY OF SOME CAREFUL THOUGHT IN WASHINGTON.

(B) WHILE WE HAVE SOME INDICATIONS GOB HAS NO PRESENT FIRM PLANS FOR THIS PROPERTY ONCE NAVY LEAVES, IT IS CHOICE REAL ESTATE WHICH MANY GOVERNMENT AND PRIVATE ENTITIES CLEARLY COVET. ALTHOUGH USG HAS PAID A GOOD RENT FOR IT SINCE 1971, WE DO NOT HAVE ANY FUTURE CLAIM ON IT, UNLIKE THE BRITISH WHO "OWNED" ALL OF JUFAIR UNTIL 1971. IN FACT GOB MIGHT FIND GOOD COSMETIC REASONS FOR NOT WANTING ANY OFFICIAL AMERICAN PRESENCE ON THE PROPERTY ONCE NAVY LEAVES.

(C) WHILE GOB HAS DEMONSTRATED - IN OFFERING AL BUSTAN TO THE EMBASSY SOME YEARS AGO, IN OFFERING ALL EMBASSIES RECLAIMED LAND AT HIGHLY CONCESSIONARY PRICES AND IN GIVING A MAJOR CHUNK OF JUFAIR TO BAHRAIN INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL RENT FREE - THAT IT DOES NOT RENT GOUGE LIKE THE COMMERCIAL SECTOR HERE, WE SHOULD ANTICIPATE IT WOULD WANT A SUBSTANTIAL RENT FOR THE PROPERTY WERE IT WILLING TO LET THE EMBASSY LEASE IT.

(D) RENOVATION AND REMODELING OF THE PROPERTY WOULD INVOLVE A SUBSTANTIAL COST, PERHAPS MORE THAN THE \$200,000 OR SO WE GUESS WE OTHERWISE WILL BE PAYING IN ANNUAL HOUSING RENT IN BAHRAIN BY 1978. IT WOULD ALSO INVOLVE CONSIDERABLE IMAGINATION AND AGONY, BUT OUR RECENT EXPERIENCE IN CONVERTING MUCH OLDER BUILDINGS INTO A FUNCTIONAL AND ATTRACTIVE CHANCERY SUGGESTS THIS IS A WORTHWHILE INVESTMENT.

5. AS DEPARTMENT CONSIDERS THIS PROPOSAL IT SHOULD UNDERSTAND THAT THIS PROPERTY IS UNIQUE IN THAT ANY OTHER AVAILABLE IN THE FORESEEABLE FUTURE AS A HOUSING COMPOUND WOULD INVOLVE THE FSWP MORE EXPENSIVE TASK OF LEASING NEW LAND AND BUILDING FROM SCRATCH.

FN TWINAM

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NNN

Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: n/a
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 10 MAY 1976
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: blochd0
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1976MANAMA00545
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D760180-0545
From: MANAMA
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1976/newtext/t19760572/aaaackaf.tel
Line Count: 99
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION NEA
Original Classification: SECRET
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: SECRET
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 76 MANAMA 544
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: blochd0
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 03 JUN 2004
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <03 JUN 2004 by ShawDG>; APPROVED <19 OCT 2004 by blochd0>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
04 MAY 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: : EMBASSY HOUSING IN BAHRAIN
TAGS: ABLD, AFSP, BA
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006